

Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, July 20, 2006

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DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



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Child protection team heads here

GENESEE COUNTY
THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, July 20, 2006

By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - Sexual and severe physical abuse of children is so widespread in the county that nine caseworkers are about to start working exclusively on those cases full time.

The state Department of Human Services plans to introduce the specialized team Friday - dedicating almost one-fifth of its 49 Child Protective Services caseworkers to the unit.

Having a dedicated number of workers focused exclusively on such cases as that of 5-year-old Rose Kelley of Flint could result in fewer children falling through the cracks, said Sheryl Thompson, director of the county DHS office.

"There is more demand (for these types of cases), and you have to coordinate more, too," Thompson said of the initiative. "We want to make sure everything gets done right the first time."

Kelley's case has received statewide attention because she died last month in what police have said were horrible conditions - a home filled with lice, fleas and dog feces - and because her parents neglected to take her to a doctor despite her being ill for days.

DHS had been in contact with her family but never petitioned to remove Rose or three other children from their home on Flint's east side.

Thompson said the idea for a specialized unit didn't come from a single case, and caseworkers themselves were among those who asked for the change. Caseworkers who are part of the new unit volunteered for the service, she said.

"It's difficult working with sexual abuse cases because it takes a toll on you," Thompson said.

Using Child Protective Services caseworkers, DHS investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children.

Deborah Pascoe, chief executive officer of the Child Advocacy Center of Genesee County, said the special unit will improve what can be a cumbersome process.

The center conducts forensic interviews with child abuse victims, working closely with both DHS caseworkers and police.

"We had so many CPS workers rotating through here (and) there's such a high turnover, it's difficult for them to be trained well in this area," Pascoe said.

"DHS workers are the first ones out in that house (so it's critical they) handle the cases properly."

The county has the second-highest number of confirmed child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse in Michigan, according to the center, and its numbers are twice the national average. Last year, caseworkers were involved in removing 499 children from their homes in Genesee County because of abuse and neglect.

The center, which opened in 2005, conducted 328 interviews last year and is on pace to double that number this year.

Thompson and Pascoe said workers in the new unit will receive special training to make them more effective.

"We should have the best-trained unit in the country," Pascoe said.

QUICK TAKE

About the new child protection team

☐ Nine caseworkers from the state Department of Human Services make up the new team.

☐ Caseworkers in the new unit will handle only child sexual abuse and severe physical abuse cases.

☐ DHS hopes the narrower

focus will keep
some of the worst
cases of abuse
from falling
through the
cracks.

Mother Charged In Toddler's Death

Woman Held Without Bond

POSTED: 4:27 pm EDT July 19, 2006

A local mother is charged with the death of her 3-year-old child. Latoya Joplin, 29, of Ypsilanti Township, was arraigned on Wednesday on charges of murder and child abuse in the death of her 3-year-old daughter Kayla. Kayla was beaten to death on Monday morning, according to prosecutors. An autopsy revealed Kayla died from internal bleeding. Joplin was ordered to remain in custody without bond.

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'Biggest nightmare' Grieving mother shaken by ex-boyfriend's refusal for plea deal

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

By Scott Hagen
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

Tomi Romer didn't know what was wrong with her baby girl. Jaylan was unresponsive. She wasn't breathing right. She wouldn't open her eyes.

The 22-year-old mother and her boyfriend, David Monroe, took the month-old baby dressed in pink and white pajamas to the hospital early on April 26.

Monroe, 25, was arrested later that day. Three days later, doctors declared Jaylan dead, the victim of shaken-baby syndrome, according to an autopsy.

Monroe, who is not the child's father, was subsequently charged with felony murder and first-degree child abuse. Police say he admitted grabbing the child from her crib and shaking her until she stopped crying.

To avoid a trial and a possible life sentence, Monroe had agreed to plead guilty to second-degree murder and first-degree child abuse. He would have spent a maximum 25 years in prison.

But Tuesday he opted to take his chances at trial, backing out of the deal. His attorney, Jerry Engle, declined to comment.

Monroe could face a life sentence upon conviction. And Romer, now his ex-girlfriend, will likely have to testify against him.

"It's the biggest nightmare of my life," Romer said. "He's making me relive this."

Her relationship with Monroe was excellent. They never fought, he was good to her 4-year-old daughter, Haley, and he helped her through the birth of Jaylan on March 29. She appreciated him so much that she added his last name to Jaylan's: Monroe-Romer.

Romer doesn't remember many details about the night Jaylan was injured. She remembers that Monroe, her housemate whom she had been dating for nearly a year, woke her up about 1:30 a.m.

Tuesday in court was "the first time I saw him since April 26," Romer said.

That night, she didn't believe Monroe had any responsibility for Jaylan's apparent sickness. Police told her later that Monroe had admitted it to them.

"All I could do was cry," she said.

The past three months have been difficult for Romer. She is still grieving the loss of her daughter. She is trying to get Haley back from protective services. The girl was taken away after the death of Jaylan -- Romer can visit her but can't be alone with her.

And she is staying with a friend since her old neighbors in the apartments off Porter Street torment her with accusations of guilt.

"Everyone was saying he was just sticking up for me," Romer said. "If I didn't want kids, I wouldn't have had kids. I wanted them. These are my children. These are the greatest things I have on this Earth. And now I only have one."

Tomi said Jaylan, barely a month old, was "incredible."

No date has been set for Monroe's preliminary examination.

"I want him to pay the consequences for my daughter," she said. "I'm not just going to let this go like there is nothing wrong."

Lansing State Journal Letters

July 20, 2006

System fails kids

The July 14 editorial about the dilemma facing shelters such as Angel House clearly represents the system's inadequate response and lack of commitment to neglected and abused children. The failure of local and state officials is evident in the fact that family court judges in our area are more concerned with protecting the rights of the custodial parent first, rather than putting the best interests of children at the forefront of any decision.

Judge Richard Garcia made a self-serving political move in promising to use his authority, but "actions speak louder than words." The legal system's rulings demonstrate a lack of judgment made on a foundation that prevention can be a more effective cure than an insignificant punishment or giving a custodial parent repeated chances to make the necessary changes to protect a child from neglect or abuse.

The Holland case is a perfect example of the system's failures.

Sheila Smalley
Mason

Granholt signs bill requiring more lead testing for children

7/19/2006, 5:19 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — More children in Michigan will be tested for lead poisoning under legislation signed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

The new law requires all children enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children assistance program to be screened for lead. More than half of the state's 227,000 residents in the federal assistance program are children.

Granholm announced the bill signing Wednesday.

"Exposure to lead can seriously impact a child's health and development," Granholm said in a statement. "Testing and treating children, especially those who live in high-risk areas, is a critical step to ensuring that they can get off to a good start in life."

The bill was sponsored by Sen. Martha Scott, a Democrat from Highland Park.

State government has set a goal of screening at least 80 percent of children served by the state's Medicaid program by 2007.

The new law should help the state meet that goal, Granholm said.

The law could cost the state up to \$500,000 for initial screening and follow-up testing, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency.

The lead testing bill is Senate Bill 1198.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Gov. Jennifer Granholm: <http://www.michigan.gov/gov>

Lansing State Journal Letters

July 20, 2006

Article notable

In response to the June 25 article "Disruptive tots tossed out":

I was pleased to see the LSJ provide a piece on children's issues. In my 25 years of working with young children and families, advocacy and funding sources have had to take a back seat on the bus.

The Keeping Early Education Positive Program is a resource that I can attest to firsthand. Your article failed to mention the expert training child-care providers receive through special workshops, hands-on support by professionals from many different areas of expertise, family support and resources, along with the personal consulting for teachers and administrative staff.

Eastminster Child Development Center in East Lansing is one of the centers that has enhanced its program policy on expulsion to better support families whose children are struggling with biting issues, aggressive behaviors, social and emotional challenges, and physical and developmental delays.

Theresa Patnoude
director
Eastminster Child Development Center
East Lansing

Jury convicts Kalamazoo Township man of kidnapping and rape

Thursday, July 20, 2006

By Cedric Ricks

cricks@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8557

A jury has convicted a Kalamazoo Township man of kidnapping and raping his estranged wife.

Marvin Scott Horn, 39, was found guilty Monday of kidnapping and four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct for the Jan. 27 and 28 attacks.

His victim testified that she met Horn for dinner at a Portage restaurant and was talking with him in the parking lot when he told her he had some birdseed in his truck that she could have. When she went into the truck, he grabbed her by the throat, wrapped duct tape around her and tied her wrist and ankles, she testified.

Horn then drove her to a home on Reed Avenue in Kalamazoo, where he took her to a room that contained sleeping bags, pillows, a candle, a cooler, lotion and a towel, she said. "He undressed and raped me," the woman testified.

Horn testified that, while at the restaurant, the two made plans to spend the evening together and that they had consensual sex.

His victim said she didn't consent to anything. "I was scared the whole time," she testified.

"When he pushed me in the back of the truck, he told me to be quiet or he would kill me," she said.

Jurors heard nearly three days of testimony in Kalamazoo County Circuit Court and deliberated more than 12 hours Friday and Monday before handing down their verdict. Horn is scheduled to be sentenced Sept. 11 by Judge Richard Ryan Lamb.

Horn pleaded no contest earlier this year to a charge of attempted solicitation of murder for asking someone who was getting out of jail to kill his estranged wife. He was sentenced to 20 months to 7 1/2 years in prison on that charge.

Police arrest boys in robbery

Suspects are just 10 and 12 years old

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

By Scott Hagen
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

A 10-year-old Jackson boy and his 12-year-old cousin were arrested Tuesday night after they allegedly tried to rob a teenager at gunpoint, police said.

The names of the boys are not being released. The young duo walked up on a 14-year-old boy outside the Quick Mart on Greenwood Street about 10:30 p.m., said Jackson Police Deputy Chief Matt Heins.

The 10-year-old pointed a pellet gun, which looked like a real gun, at the teen's neck and demanded his money.

"Then they shot him," Heins said. The pellet broke the skin between the cheek and the neck.

Heins said the Air-Soft pistol "many times appears to be real."

The 12-year-old, who thought the incident was funny, took the gun and shot the older boy in the legs two more times, Heins said.

The 14-year-old refused to give the two his money. The kids ran off and shot a 29-year-old woman in the buttocks, Heins said.

"She said it was a very sharp, stinging pain," Heins said.

The teenage victim was familiar with the young suspects. Police picked up the 10-year-old boy at his house in the 1200 block of Woodbridge Street. The 12-year-old was picked up a short time later at his house in the 200 block of Second Street, Heins said.

Petitions, the equivalent of an adult warrant, are being sought through the prosecutor's office for a count of attempted armed robbery and a count of felonious assault. Both kids were lodged at the Jackson County Youth Center.

JEFF GERRITT: These inmates want to steer kids away from prison

July 20, 2006

The year is only half gone and homicides have topped 200 in Detroit -- a 17% jump from a year ago. Nonfatal shootings have spiked nearly 30% to more than 720.

Much of this violence is as senseless as it is brutal. A baby dies when a drug dealer opens fire on the wrong house. A bullet hits an 8-year-old standing in his front window. A man wielding a sawed-off shotgun enters a church and kills the mother of his former girlfriend.

Anyone who has an easy answer for this craziness is either lying or seriously misinformed. But there's no disputing where it ends -- the morgue or prison, and that's not a bad place to start looking for even small solutions.

Inmates who are part of an NAACP group at Ryan Correctional Facility in Detroit have proposed a Youth Deterrent Program that would bring young people into prison to get them thinking about the long-term consequences of their decisions and actions. It would not be another discredited Scared Straight effort -- you can't scare most kids today, anyway. But a visit to a state prison can separate the realities of incarceration from the fantasies of thug life. It can provide a sobering look at what it's like to grow old behind bars without family or friends, live doubled-up in a closet-sized steel cell, lose all privacy, even when showering or using the toilet, and have every movement controlled and watched.

The Michigan Department of Corrections will decide soon whether to change a longstanding policy and permit the proposed Youth Deterrent Program at Ryan. "We'd like to have an impact on possibly reducing violence in the Detroit area," said MDOC spokesman Russ Marlan.

The NAACP members inside Ryan have undertaken many positive activities, including raising money for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, donating Thanksgiving turkeys to needy families, and working with Gospel Against AIDS. I met with them last month as an invited speaker on Father's Day. I know they are committed to changing themselves and improving their neighborhoods.

"We're concerned about what's going in the community -- the atrocities and violence," said Darryl Woods, 34, a Ryan inmate who's serving a life sentence for murder. He's chairman of the NAACP prison program committee, and his son Darryl Woods Jr. of Detroit will enter Michigan State University this fall. "We believe we can help deter young people from criminal activities, drugs and violence, and encourage them to get their education."

Youth Deterrent would run similarly to the Wayne County Sheriff's Department's successful Dose of Reality program, which is also a Comcast cable show. Dose brings 5,000 people a year, mostly teenagers, through the county jail. Investigator Joyce Pearson organizes three or four tours a week and would also handle groups for Ryan. Some young

people come under court order. Schools, churches, social workers, counselors and parents refer others.

Pearson plans to bring one group of about 20 young people a week to Ryan. They would talk with a select and trained group of inmates who would stress the importance of education, peacefully resolving conflict, and avoiding guns and drugs.

A similar program at Ryan ran for three years in the early 1990s, but ended after 10 inmates escaped in 1994. The escape had nothing to do with the youth program, but the state clamped down on security in all areas.

No one should expect miracles. Demonized by mainstream society and denied legitimate opportunities for education or even a decent-paying factory job, some young people live in a world in which violence, prison and even death are norms.

"These young men are committing suicide," Carl Taylor, a Michigan State University professor and nationally known expert on youth culture, told me last week. "Their world is built around violence. You and I know there's something else, but they don't."

Still, if anyone can get the attention of a young person headed the wrong way, it's someone who has been down the same road. The Youth Deterrent Program, run with volunteers, including the Shrine of the Black Madonna and Save Our Sons and Daughters, would cost taxpayers nothing.

Surrounding the Ryan prison on Detroit's east side is one of the nation's most violent cities. Some of the men who helped build that reputation want to change it.

"Many of the brothers are deeply moved by what is going on in the streets," Woods wrote me in a recent letter. "We must shut down the lie that it is a badge of honor to come to prison."

No one can deliver that message better than the men who stay there.

JEFF GERRITT is a Free Press editorial writer. Contact him at gerritt@freepress.com

Attorney: Reluctant dad has options

Thursday, July 20, 2006

ERIN ALBERTY
THE SAGINAW NEWS

A Saginaw Township man who launched the so-called "Roe vs. Wade for Men" paternity lawsuit still has options to keep his case alive despite a judge's determination that the suit was "frivolous," his attorney said Wednesday.

Attorney Jeffery A. Cojocar does not know whether his client, Matt Dubay, will appeal U.S. District Judge David M. Lawson's ruling that the 25-year-old computer technician must continue to pay child support for a daughter he says he did not choose to have.

"I don't understand how a lawsuit can be so frivolous when it garners national and international attention, when my office has been contacted by hundreds and hundreds of people who support us," Cojocar said. "If it's frivolous, why did the attorney general have to have a press conference when they got involved?"

Lawson on Tuesday dismissed the suit Dubay filed in U.S. District Court in Bay City against Saginaw County Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas, state Attorney General Mike Cox and Lauren Wells, 20, Dubay's former girlfriend and mother of his 1-year-old daughter, Elisabeth.

Dubay claimed Thomas and Cox are upholding a paternity law that is unconstitutional because it requires the father to pay child support "even if he did not want the child to be born." He alleged that Wells knew he didn't want a child and that she told him she could not get pregnant because of a medical condition.

If a pregnant woman can opt out of motherhood through abortion or adoption, a man who causes an unintended pregnancy should have the choice of declining the financial burden of fatherhood, Dubay said.

The defendants' rationale for dismissing the case relied on a previous paternity lawsuit that did not involve the same arguments about equal protection, Cojocar said.

Lawson wrote that "the fundamental flaw in Dubay's claim is that he fails to see that the state played no role in the conception or birth of the child in this case, or in the decisions that resulted in the birth of the child."

Teenage refugees need foster homes

Claudia Linsley
The Battle Creek Enquirer

Imagine yourself as a teenager, running away from religious persecution in your country.

And leaving your parents behind.

That is the life story of as many as 60 youths — mostly boys, ages 12 to 17 — who will arrive in Battle Creek soon. Some have risked their lives to escape from Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, to refugee camps in Thailand or Malaysia. They have existed in the primitive camps, waiting to begin a new life in a new country.

"Now they have a chance to come here," said Edward Thawnghmung, who in 1980 was one of the first persons from Myanmar to come to Battle Creek.

About 400 people from Myanmar's Chin state live here now, according to Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, which has helped many of them find jobs and housing.

Now LSSM seeks foster homes for the refugee teens and will hold an informational meeting at 11 a.m. Saturday at First Baptist Church, 80 E. Michigan Ave.

"We passed out fliers and invited all people, all churches, to come," Thawnghmung said. He has helped 242 people from the Chin state to settle here, many from his hometown.

The 90-minute meeting will include information about refugee foster care, an explanation of the teens' situation in Myanmar and their journey here and a Power Point presentation of children from Myanmar in a refugee camp.

Attendees who want more specific information may stay for an orientation session.

At a similar gathering in Battle Creek for members of the local Chin community, the attendance was sparse.

"I think they are worried about who will be their foster child and if they are related," Thawnghmung said. "And some of them are still living many people in the same apartment, and no room for a foster child."

In addition, "other cultures outside of America don't have a good idea of what foster care is," said Alta McGee, foster care supervisor for the LSSM. "They may think a child has been taken away from his family because he was misbehaving ... we have some education to do on this."

The congregation at First Baptist Church has learned much from its more than 70 Chin

members, said the Rev. Jason Crosby, interim pastor.

"They've helped us to see our unique mission. We're different people, but we've learned from our differences and worked together," he said.

Crosby said Saturday's meeting will present an important opportunity for the community.

"These are kids that have been living in the jungle, and they have a community that cares for them, both Burmese and not," Crosby said.

"My faith calls me to this, to respond to a need that is right in front of our face. It's an obligation, not an option."

Claudia Linsley covers religion. She can be reached at 966-0689 or at clinsley@battlecr.gannett.com.

Originally published July 20, 2006

MACOMB COUNTY

Macomb Co. tries to ease dental costs

County-wide insurance plan is almost reality

July 20, 2006

BY STEVE NEAVLING

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A first-in-the-state program that would offer all Macomb County residents -- regardless of income -- the chance to buy dental insurance through the county is close to becoming reality, commissioners said after endorsing the plan Wednesday.

While many counties -- including Wayne and Oakland -- offer free and reduced-price dental services to lower-income residents, Macomb would be the first in the state to take a bite out of those costs for all residents.

Commissioners expect to give the plan final approval at their full board meeting July 27.

Barring any last-minute hitches, the discount will become effective Aug. 10.

"We all recognize the fact that a lot of people are losing benefits, and the first benefits you lose are dental and vision," Angela Willis, director of the Macomb County Department of Senior Services said Wednesday. "We get a lot of calls about dental costs."

Wayne and Oakland officials said Wednesday that they may explore offering a similar discount.

The plan would cost \$69 a year, regardless of age, income and the number of members of a family covered under it. Discounts generally range from 20% to 60% and include oral exams, X-rays, cleanings, surgery, fillings and crowns.

The county is paying nothing to take part in the program, offering Benefit Control Methods, the Plymouth-based company offering it, the chance to sell the plan to a large market.

Commissioner Jonathan Switalski, D-Warren, hailed the plan as a major step toward improving the health and hygiene of county residents at no cost to taxpayers.

"It's an inexpensive plan that offers excellent benefits regardless of age or income level." Benefit Control Methods partners with health-care providers willing to reduce the cost of services. The providers benefit by receiving more clients.

In Macomb's case, more than 100 dentists in the county agreed to the discounted services. While Benefit Control Methods already provides discounts on prescription drugs and vision and hearing services to adults in Macomb County and other municipalities, this is its first attempt to offer a dental plan to an entire community.

Brian Manning, executive vice president of the company, said he hopes to offer similar discounts to other communities.

"We would love to do this statewide," Manning said.

Contact STEVE NEAVLING at 586-469-4935 or sneavling@freepress.com.

GETTING THE OK

- Macomb County commissioners expect to approve a discount dental plan for all residents.

Where: 1 S. Main St., Mt. Clemens, ninth floor, Macomb County Administration Building.

When: 7 p.m. July 27.

Comments will be heard at the beginning and end of the meeting. If the plan is approved, residents may sign up by calling the Department of Human Services at 586-469-6313.

DENTAL DISCOUNT PLAN

- Macomb County officials are considering a plan that would offer dental coverage to all residents. Here are details:

Cost: \$69 per family per year.

Benefits:

- Discounts of 20% to 60% on services including oral exams, fillings, crowns, braces, surgery and X-rays.
- A checkup with teeth cleaning would cost about \$41 for adults and \$29 for children, an estimated 45% savings.
- A 20% reduction on braces could save someone up to \$1,000.

Henry Ford's e-prescriptions surpass 1 million

System says it has saved lives, money

July 20, 2006

BY KATIE MERX
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Henry Ford Medical Group has filled more than 1 million prescriptions electronically since it launched a program last year at the request of American automakers to cut costs by boosting the use of generic drugs.

The 17-month-old e-prescribe system also flags potential errors, and the medical group reports that it has saved lives and money by helping doctors avoid dangerous drug complications and increasing the use of generic and low-cost prescriptions.

Henry Ford expects e-prescribing to save the Detroit-based health system \$1 million this year. It believes that other insurers whose patients use Henry Ford doctors will save another \$2 million thanks to the program. Patients and employers also are expected to benefit financially through lower co-pays and a slower rate of increase in their prescription drug costs.

Here's how it works:

Every time a doctor types in a high-cost, brand-name drug, a computer prompt urges trying an equivalent generic or less-expensive brand-name drug.

If the doctor types in a medicine that could cause a problem in combination with a patient's other medicines, the computer flags that problem. The same thing happens if the doctor prescribes a medicine to which the patient could be allergic.

Once the prescription is complete, it is transmitted electronically to a pharmacy, so it can be filled while the patient is en route, reducing or eliminating the wait time at the pharmacy.

Doctors don't have to change the prescriptions when prompted, but Henry Ford reports that in many cases they do.

Already the medical group reports:

- ☐ Doctors have changed more than 98,000 prescriptions due to system alerts.
- ☐ 63,000 of those changes resulted in the prescription of less-expensive drugs.
- ☐ 7,300 potential allergic reactions have been avoided.

Henry Ford expects the impact of e-prescribing to continue to grow.

The program began with 60 doctors writing electronic prescriptions in February 2005. By the end of the first year, 300 of Henry Ford's 800 physicians had signed on, writing 500,000 prescriptions. Since February, another 300 doctors have adopted e-prescribing.

With 600 doctors onboard, the health system wrote half a million prescriptions in the last five months. The group's doctors are writing an average of 23,000 electronic prescriptions each week, making e-prescriptions a full 80% of the orders they write.

By the end of the year, the health system expects to have all its doctors prescribing electronically.

"This innovative and collaborative effort has proven itself on a daily basis," said Woody Williams, executive director of health care for **General Motors Corp.** "It's a testament to what can be accomplished when a community rallies around an effort."

GM, **Ford Motor Co.** and **Chrysler Group** asked Henry Ford Health System, the **Health Alliance Plan** and **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan** to launch e-prescribe programs last year.

Blue Cross has offered the e-Prescribe program to 6,000 southeastern Michigan physicians but hasn't released its official results yet.

The push for e-prescribe was part of American automakers' efforts to cut their mounting health care costs. GM alone spent \$5.4 billion on health care for its employees, retirees and their dependents last year. Ford spent \$3.5 billion and Chrysler \$2.3 billion.

Contact KATIE MERX at 313-222-8762 or kmerx@freepress.com

Gateses to Finance H.I.V. Vaccine Search

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

Published: July 20, 2006

SEATTLE, July 19 — The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded more than a quarter of a billion dollars on Wednesday to researchers in 19 countries to speed the lagging development of an H.I.V. vaccine.

The grants, totaling \$287 million, are the largest private investment in making such a vaccine, the foundation said. They represent a significant shift in emphasis, to large-scale collaborative projects instead of small teams of researchers working independently.

The money will be given over five years to 16 scientific teams, including two New York groups. The scientists applied for the grants before Warren E. Buffett announced last month that he was giving \$31 billion to the Gates Foundation.

The Gates Foundation has made development of an effective vaccine against H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS, a major goal, and the new grants bring to \$528 million the foundation's investment for this purpose. By contrast, the National Institutes of Health has spent \$3.4 billion since the 1980's to develop a vaccine.

A vaccine to fight H.I.V., the human immunodeficiency virus, is the best hope to control the AIDS epidemic, health officials and experts say. But that hope has been frustrated again and again.

In 1984, Margaret M. Heckler, President Ronald Reagan's health and human services secretary, and Dr. Robert Gallo, a discoverer of the virus, predicted an H.I.V. vaccine by 1986.

Although more than 30 experimental H.I.V. vaccines have been tested in people, only one has completed full-scale testing. That vaccine, Aidsvax, made by VaxGen, failed in a large trial that ended in 2003.

Until now, most H.I.V. vaccine research has been conducted by small independent teams. But the new grants are being structured to encourage the 165 scientists receiving them to

join forces. The goal is to overcome major immunologic and other scientific hurdles that hinder development of such a vaccine.

The body can invoke two types of immune reactions to defend against dangerous infectious agents.

One way is to produce neutralizing antibodies, which are proteins that bind like a lock and key to areas on the infectious agent.

A second way, cellular immunity, is to produce T-cells that seek and destroy infected cells.

Most licensed vaccines work by stimulating the body to make neutralizing antibodies. But experimental H.I.V. vaccines have failed to produce such antibodies. The virus's propensity to mutate and produce different genetic subtypes will require an effective vaccine to produce antibodies that can neutralize a wide range of strains.

The foundation said an effective vaccine might also have to stimulate T-cell production. Six grants will focus on ways to develop cellular immunity.

Five grants will go to identifying new techniques to develop novel vaccines that produce neutralizing antibodies.

The remaining five grants are for creating central laboratories and information analysis facilities so that all the grant recipients can openly share data and develop standardized ways to compare their findings. Lack of such standardized tools hampers H.I.V. vaccine research, the foundation said.

A team led by Susan Zolla-Pazner, an immunologist at New York University, will receive \$8.4 million to investigate the use of a specific area of the outer coat of the virus, known as the V3 region. The aim will be to develop neutralizing antibodies that attack a broad range of H.I.V. strains.

Another team led by Dr. David Ho of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center in Manhattan will receive \$24.7 million to design experimental H.I.V. vaccines that bind to dendritic cells. These immune cells help strengthen production of antibodies and cellular immunity.

State jobless rate increased to 6.3 percent in June

7/19/2006, 6:50 p.m. ET

By TIM MARTIN

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan's unemployment rate rose slightly to 6.3 percent in June, state officials said Wednesday.

That's up from the 6.0 percent seasonally adjusted rate in May.

Michigan's unemployment rate remains above the national average, which was 4.6 percent in June.

The change in the state's jobless rate was "relatively minor," according to Rick Waclawek, director of the Department of Labor and Economic Growth's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

The size of the state's labor force increased by 23,000 in June. About 10,000 more people were counted as employed and 13,000 more were counted as unemployed than in May.

The state gained about 5,000 payroll jobs in June, according to a monthly survey of employers. That raises the level of payroll jobs to about 4.37 million.

About 7,000 jobs were gained in the government sector in June, the state said. About 3,000 jobs were gained in manufacturing and 2,000 were added in professional and business services.

About 3,000 jobs were lost in the trade, transportation and utilities segment of the economy.

In June 2005, the state's jobless rate was 6.7 percent.

Michigan has lost about 8,000 nonfarm payroll jobs since then, according to the state's employment estimates.

The heaviest-hit segment has been manufacturing, which had 18,000 fewer jobs last month than in June 2005. The state has an estimated 13,000 fewer retail trade jobs.

But in the past year, about 11,000 jobs have been added in professional and business services and about 10,000 have been added in education and health services.

MICHIGAN BUSINESS

Michigan's labor market stabilizes

Jobless rate edges up a bit to 6.3%

July 20, 2006

BY JOHN GALLAGHER
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Michigan's labor market remained stable in June, with a small rise in the unemployment rate but no dramatic change in the size of the workforce.

The jobless rate for June edged up to 6.3% from May's rate of 6%. The national unemployment rate for June was 4.6%, leaving Michigan hovering among the states with the highest jobless rates.

But the story in June was the lack of dramatic changes.

"After some significant monthly movements in the jobless rate in the first half of 2006, the May-to-June change in the unemployment rate was relatively minor," said Rick Waclawek, director of the state's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

Manufacturers added 3,000 jobs during the month, while government added 7,000 and professional and business services added 3,000. Those gains were offset somewhat by losses of 3,000 jobs in trade, transportation and utilities.

Since February, manufacturing employment has held steady in Michigan. The June statewide job total of 661,000 factory jobs was the same as the February total.

Contact JOHN GALLAGHER at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Mich. unemployment rises Sour job market fuels 'one-state recession' as era of lucrative manufacturing jobs fades into the past.

Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

Michigan's unemployment rate ticked up to 6.3 percent in June, up from 6 percent in May, as a weak job market continues to weigh down the state.

"After some significant monthly movements in the jobless rate in the first half of 2006, the May-to-June change in the unemployment rate was relatively minor," said Rick Waclawek, director of the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives of the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

A slight increase of 10,000 jobs in manufacturing and government in June was offset by 12,000 total jobs lost, spread out among almost every other major sector, according to the Department of Labor's statistics.

It was the 58th consecutive month that Michigan's unemployment rate registered higher than the nation's, which remained unchanged at 4.6 percent in June.

Lansing economist Patrick Anderson has often described Michigan's lackluster economy as a "one-state recession."

Fueling that recession is the loss of thousands of auto industry jobs during the past year. Those stable, manufacturing jobs that paid handsome salaries defined an era that has virtually ended now in Michigan.

General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. are cutting a total of 60,000 jobs nationally as part of sweeping restructuring efforts at their struggling North American units.

Parts maker Delphi Corp. is axing up to another 20,000 factory jobs nationwide as part of its Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Many of those cuts come right here in Michigan. The state has lost 18,000 manufacturing jobs since June 2005 and more than 158,000 from 1990 to 2005, a 19 percent decline.

Employment outlook bleak

Michigan's employment situation may get worse before it gets better, because the state still hasn't felt the full force of the auto industry job cuts, said Dana Johnson, chief economist for Comerica Inc.

"We will see a big drop in employment in the next six months, reflecting those buyouts," Johnson said. The ripple effect will be a continued weak housing market and sluggish job growth, he said.

For the past year, Detroit resident Ella Williams has put in a seven-hour shift, five days a week looking for a job at the Michigan Works! employment agency in downtown Detroit.

"Things are so tight right now, unless you have a friend on the inside, it's hard to get hired," she said. "It's all about who you know right now."

The 40-year-old mother of two hasn't worked since a three-week stint last summer when she packaged bumpers and side mirrors for Ford vehicles, she said.

To get to that job, Williams took a bus to the downtown Michigan Works! office, then was shuttled with other temporary workers 20 miles away to a facility in Brownstown Township. Williams doesn't own a car.

"All I can do is pray that my hard work will pay off," Williams said.

State lags in 'smart' jobs

As manufacturing jobs fade, the creation of "knowledge-based jobs" in Michigan grows at a much slower pace than the rest of the nation, according to the Ann Arbor think-tank Michigan Future Inc. Roughly defined as good-paying work that requires a college degree, knowledge-based jobs in Michigan grew 17 percent from 1990 to 2005, compared to 31.6 percent nationally, according to Michigan Future. If the state had matched the national rate, Michigan would have 220,000 more jobs than it does today, said Louis Glazer, executive director of Michigan Future.

But there has been some growth in "smart" jobs.

From June 2005 to June 2006, there have been relatively strong gains in the professional and business services (11,000 jobs) and education and health services (10,000 jobs), according to the state's latest data. Those sectors -- which include many educated or skilled workers -- need to keep on growing for Michigan's economy to rebound and diversify, Johnson said.

Legal secretary Toni Cusmano is among those skilled workers who have recently found work.

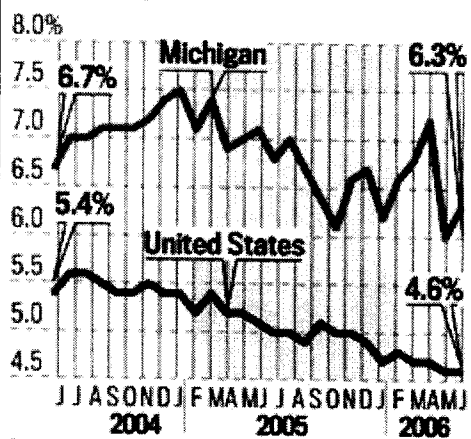
"I was surprised it took me so long," said Cusmano, 28, of Trenton. "Everywhere I interviewed, I was told I was qualified but no one was hiring. I sent out nearly 50 resumes and I finally found a job last week. I do feel like things are starting to pick up slowly," she said, since she knows two other friends who have found work in the past month.

"Finding a job is hard work."

You can reach Louis Aguilar at (313) 222-2760 or laguilar@detnews.com.

Unemployment rate

Seasonally adjusted



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan
Department of Labor & Economic Growth

The Detroit News

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Detroit-Warren-Livonia area increased to 6.6 percent in June.

That is up from 6.1 percent in May but down from 7.3 percent in June 2005.

On the Net:

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth: <http://www.michigan.gov/dleg>

Granholm Awards \$1.3 Million In Grants

MIRS, Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Today Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** Granholm announced more than \$1.3 million in grants for Michigan Works! agencies to work with local partners to develop regional workforce development strategies.

"In the face of global economic change, this initiative will help Michigan to compete and win in the new marketplace," Granholm said. "We are forming partnerships to create new and different ways of strengthening and growing our economy. We are collaborating to build a workforce that can embrace innovation and support the development of new industries."

Program Seeks to Fight Poverty by Building Family Ties

By ERIK ECKHOLM
The New York Times

Published: July 20, 2006

BATON ROUGE, La., July 14 — The agency approached Herman Porter and his girlfriend, Aswanni Dunn, in what sociologists call the “magic moment,” the period surrounding the birth of a child when romance and dreams tend to soar, even among unmarried couples whose futures may be statistically doubtful. Would they like to enroll in a class about relationship skills and commitment?

Mr. Porter, 25, has two children with two other women, but this time, he said, “I decided I’d try anything that might help us stay together.”

Ms. Dunn, 20, who has a 6-year-old with another man, said: “I knew Herman was a good person, but sometimes we had arguments. I was afraid he would go out too much and never spend time with us.”

The couple, who had a baby girl on July 7, are well into the class, a 21-week program at Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge, a nonprofit center that last year added classes on building strong families to its panoply of prenatal, parenthood and children’s services.

The course is a prototype in the Bush administration’s campaign to fight poverty and aid children by promoting marriage — an effort that, after years in the pilot stage, is about to get going in earnest this fall and has drawn surprising support from some liberal poverty experts.

In a little-noticed bill reauthorizing welfare reform this year, Congress earmarked \$750 million over five years for programs to promote “healthy marriages” and “responsible fatherhood.”

The administration is now sifting through more than 2,000 proposals and in September will award \$100 million to nonprofit groups, churches and local agencies around the country for marriage programs and \$50 million for related fatherhood programs. In what

amounts to a large experiment, the grants should extend the reach of marriage education to tens of thousands of low-income couples, many in communities where stable cohabiting relationships, let alone lasting marriages, are rare.

When President Bush announced his marriage initiative four years ago, some liberal poverty experts were skeptical. They feared that conservatives were simply pushing their ideological agenda, portraying wedlock as a panacea for the deeply rooted social ills of the poor.

Bush officials and conservative poverty experts do tend to discuss the topic with a special zeal. Speaking recently at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research group, Michael O. Leavitt, the secretary of health and human services, put marriage promotion alongside stricter work rules as the “unfinished business of welfare reform.”

But nearly everyone agrees that the breakdown of families — to take one indicator, one-third of all births in the country and two-thirds of black births are now out of wedlock — is feeding into a destructive cycle of poverty, educational and developmental deficits, and incarceration.

Poverty experts have also warmed in recent years to the idea of working with parents to promote workable bonds, if not always marriage, and of working with couples, rather than focusing only on mothers as many social programs have.

Liberals and conservatives both saw an opportunity in an unexpected research finding a few years ago that belied stereotypes of random sex and childbearing among the poor: at the time of birth, 80 percent of single mothers are romantically involved and in touch with the father, said Sara S. McLanahan, a sociologist at Princeton University and leader of a national study of birth couples called the Fragile Families Project.

“The fathers come to the hospital, and they practically all say they want to get married,” Dr. McLanahan said. But most parents in nonmarital births have low incomes and limited education, the study showed, and many have had children with other partners. Within a few years, many of the couples are estranged.

“The conservatives have picked up on the ‘high hopes’ part of the finding, the expressed desire to marry,” Dr. McLanahan said. “The liberals see all the ways these couples are disadvantaged.”

“I like the idea of teaching relationship skills and how to manage conflict, something middle-class people often pay for,” she said. “But if this is just about preaching marriage, then I don’t see any benefit,” she said, noting that programs should also offer things like job training and mental health services.

It is not yet clear what share of the new federal money will go to programs taking this broader approach. Nor has it been proved that relationship training — shown to help relationships and communications in experiments with middle-class couples — will make a long-term difference among the poor, who face multiple challenges. The government has sponsored three major studies to measure any gains. Officials also emphasize that participation in the programs will be voluntary.

“We hope to see impacts on the rate of marriage, but just as importantly on the quality of their relationships,” said M. Robin Dion, a researcher with Mathematica Policy Research, one of three research groups that have received federal money to evaluate model programs, including the one in Baton Rouge. This might help fathers stay closer to their children even if couples do not marry, Ms. Dion said.

For its relationship classes, Family Road has adopted the curriculum developed by Drs. John and Julie Gottman of the University of Washington. Small groups of couples meet for 21 weekly lessons with topics like “prevent harmful fights,” “what kids do to relationships,” “prevent and recover from infidelity” and “considering marriage.”

The other night, three couples were working on the 19th class, on money problems. They watched a video of couples discussing money issues and then, with the help of a married couple serving as facilitators, discussed their thoughts about money and managing personal differences in spending and saving.

Whatever the topic, the emphasis is on managing conflict, not wishing it away. “The fights don’t decrease, but it’s just easier,” said Dominick Wilkins, 21, who recently married Jamie Wilkins, also 21, after they joined the course and had a child together. “We know how to fight and keep it from getting out of hand.”

Just how much these two are up against is suggested by their histories: Jamie was abandoned by her parents and raised by a grandmother; she was married once before; and each of them has a child with another partner. In their favor is steady employment: she is in the Army, and he works for a city recreation center.

Justin Knight, 21, and Megan Sibley, 19, who are expecting their first child next month, held hands as they navigated the money lesson. Mr. Knight has worked in heating and air-conditioning since he quit school after the eighth grade and said he dreamed of opening his own business. But in his time at Family Road, he said, he has realized that he should get his G.E.D., something the center offers at no charge.

The couple have been together two years. Marriage? “That’s part of the plan,” Ms. Sibley said, adding that they wanted to have the baby first.

Many of the people in the class have never had the experience of being friends, as a couple, with other couples, said Dena C. Morrison, the executive director of Family Road — one more sign of the strained families and communities they have endured. The chance to change that is another possible benefit of the program. “Some couples have formed friendships with each other during the course, and they aren’t used to that,” Ms. Morrison said.

Time will tell what good the course does, for these couples and thousands of others who may enter programs with varied approaches. For now, Herman Porter is a believer.

“If our tempers flare, we’re able to deal with it,” Mr. Porter said. “I work nights, so on weekends I liked to chill with friends. She was feeling that weekends were a time for us to be together, and I began to see how much she cared about that.”

“If it wasn’t for this class we probably wouldn’t be together still,” he said. “Now we’re engaged.”

Filling the gaps Program supports needy when other funds fall short

Thursday, July 20, 2006

By Cedric Ricks

cricks@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8557

Donations of sleeping bags, pillows and tubes of sunscreen meant about 75 area youths could be more comfortable at Sherman Lake Camp this summer.

The items, given by the United Steel Workers of America 2-1010, are just one example the gifts Family & Children Services receives each year to help its clients.

Last year, about \$146,000 worth of goods -- everything from diapers to laundry detergent to cooking utensils -- and nearly \$220,000 in cash was contributed to the agency through its Handle With Care program, which has become an essential resource as state funding has been squeezed.

Family & Children Services, 1608 Lake St., Kalamazoo, provides foster care, adoption services, respite and home-based care, family counseling and other family-support programs to 8,500 clients in Kalamazoo, Barry, Calhoun, Van Buren and Allegan counties. "The bulk of our programs focus on creating healthy families and safe homes," said Rosemary Gardiner, director of development and public relations.

Handle With Care assists low-income clients when other means of support aren't available, Gardiner said.

"If a person can buy the groceries and pay the utility bill but that takes all their money and they are short on their rent, their social worker can apply to the Handle With Care fund so the family is not evicted," she said.

Another example is a young girl badly in need of dental care for an abscessed tooth. She had been taken to a clinic, but was put on a waiting list.

"In the meantime, in our foster home, her jaw was so swollen she couldn't go to school," Gardiner said. "They had her on antibiotics. The foster-care worker came in and said 'I need this tooth extracted,' which was a fairly expensive item.

"Thanks to community donors, Handle With Care was able to do that so this child could go back to school."

Family & Children Services is in the midst of raising funds for this year's Handle With Care program. The goal is \$220,000.

In addition to United Way agencies, the largest funding sources for Family & Children Services and its \$8 million annual budget are Community Mental Health agencies and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

“State funding is falling further and further below need every year,” Gardiner said.

“We are really looking for the community to step up even more than in the past to support our clients and our families.”

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MIKE'S TECH TIP

Find emergency resources on updated Web site

The Department of Homeland Security has recently updated its Web site, www.ready.gov. The site has updated emergency preparedness resources, including special preparedness information for pet owners, senior citizens and individuals with disabilities and special needs.

- MIKE WENDLAND (READ MIKE'S BLOG AT WWW.FREEP.COM/PCMIKE)

Published July 20, 2006

Early outs: Another big round of retirements isn't what Michigan needs

A Lansing State Journal editorial

As the state capital, Lansing has a big interest in any discussion of changes in the state work force.

Gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos is trying to start such a discussion with a proposal for another early-retirement offer to state workers.

Lansing and Michigan, though, have no interest in another big "early out" for state workers.

DeVos, to be clear, hasn't endorsed a "big" plan, a little one or anything in between. He favors a retirement proposal, with details to come later.

But details are everything on this issue. Here are a few:

- The size of state government is the smallest since 1974.
- Michigan has offered two early retirements in the last decade. The last one, in 2002, was accepted by nearly 8,000 workers - almost 13 percent of the entire work force.
- Payroll, as a percentage of state spending, has declined by about one-third since 1982, according to a 2004 Citizens Research Council of Michigan report.

Nevertheless, DeVos and others think the state can be more efficient in its operations. And, let's be frank, any large institution has waste in it.

So, it is possible that there are some jobs that could go. But advocates need to look carefully because state employment isn't what it used to be.

The state work force hasn't just shrunk in recent decades; it's entire focus has changed. According to

the CRC, the Corrections Department had 5 percent of state workers in 1966. Now Corrections accounts for about one-third of state employment.

In other words, there are far fewer non-Corrections jobs from which to pull retirees. And it's doubtful DeVos would argue for a smaller guard force to deal with Michigan's huge prison population. Nor do early-out plans automatically cull the unnecessary jobs.

In the 2002 exit, the Department of Human Services (then the Family Independence Agency) lost 20 percent of its work force. By comparison, Michigan's gaming oversight body lost two employees.

Not all state services are equal. Retirement plans that further strain efforts, for example, to protect at-risk children make no sense at all.

Then there's the issue of seniority.

By definition, early retirement plans remove the most experienced workers. And experience is supposed to be a good thing.

In his own retirement plan, state Rep. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, suggests the goal isn't to shrink state government but replace expensive older workers with cheaper young ones.

But there's a reason younger employees come with smaller salaries - they are less experienced and usually less productive.

If DeVos or Jones or others can point to particular jobs in state government that Michigan can live without, they should do so. But to make vague suggestions for retirements won't advance the debate on what state government should do - and who should do it.